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Levenger Announces It Will Be Exclusive Catalog Retailer For NuvoMedia's Rocket eBook This Holiday Season

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Publication title: PR Newswire. New York: Sep 18, 1998. pg. 1

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Abstract (Article Summary)

DELRAY BEACH, Fla., Sept. 18 /PRNewswire/ – This holiday season, Levenger takes reading into the future as it becomes the exclusive catalog retailer offering NuvoMedia's Rocket eBook(TM). This electronic reading product designed by NuvoMedia takes electronic book buying one giant leap forward, from instantly ordering books to now instantly receiving them. You can have your favorite books at your fingertips. Beginning in late October, Rocket eBook owners can purchase and download hundreds of titles from barnesandnoble.com on the World Wide Web or through America Online (Keyword: bn).

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Full Text (625 words)

Copyright PR Newswire - NY Sep 18, 1998

Industry: ENTERTAINMENT; INTERNET MULTIMEDIA ONLINE; RETAIL

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Turning the tables on service: Operators install self-serve terminals and kiosks

Ed Rubinstein. *Nation's Restaurant News*. New York: Sep 14, 1998. Vol. 32, Iss. 37; pg. 99, 1 pgs

Subjects: Restaurants, Kiosks, Fast food industry, Customer services

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Locations: US

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Abstract (Article Summary)

In Chapel Hill home of the University of North Carolina, a new kiosk at the Top of the Hill Restaurant & Brewery is attracting a lot more than Tar Heel fans. The restaurant, like other food service enterprises, both domestically and abroad, is empowering its guests and boosting service in the process by installing customer-activated terminals (CAT), which are either computer- or smart-card based. The recently installed kiosk allows guests not only to enroll in the operator's frequent dining program (called The Guild), but also to update personal information, check point balances, and print reward certificates directly from the kiosk. The CAT system has had a definitive impact on the chain's comp figures.

Full Text (1273 words)

Copyright Lebhar-Friedman, Inc. Sep 14, 1998

Restaurant operators look forward to serving the influx of college-basketball-crazed students every fall in North Carolina. But in Chapel Hill, home to the University of North Carolina, a new kiosk at the Top of the Hill Restaurant & Brewery is attracting a lot more than Tar Heel fans.

The restaurant, like other foodservice enterprises, both domestically and abroad, is empowering its guests and boosting service in the process by installing customer-activated terminals, or CATs, which are either computer- or smart-card based.

As Top of the Hill Top managing partner Scott Maitland explained, the recently installed kiosk allows guests not only to "enroll in the operator's frequent dining program [called The Guild] but also to update personal information, check point balances and print reward certificates directly from the kiosk."

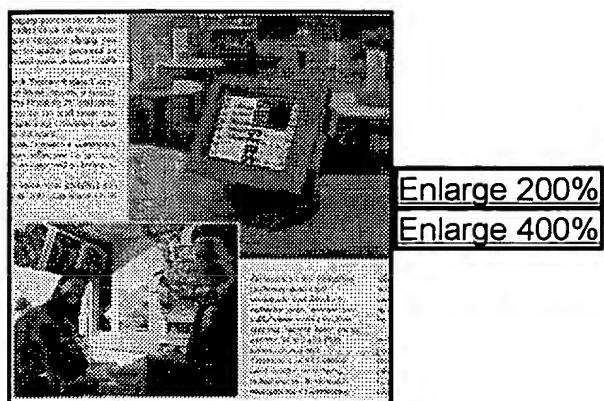
Manufactured by Info Touch Technologies Corp., Burnaby, British Columbia, the kiosk sports a touchscreen keyboard, a 266-megahertz Pentium PC and internal printer, and interfaces directly to and from the restaurant's Computer Aided Marketing customer database and POSitouch point-of-sale software.

Maitland mused that the kiosk "creates a community" of sorts. "And it's much more effective to get customers to come in once a week as opposed to trying to lure first-timers," he added.

Maitland said that since the kiosk was installed this past summer, it has added about 100 customers to its Guild program, which now has about 570 members. Yet the kiosk market is relatively mature, and the success of some installations has been spotty at best - even in today's electronic age.

Hilton Hotels Corp., in conjunction with IBM and American Express, tested the first "multi-application" smart card test. Launched last summer, the system gave guests at eight properties the chance to automatically check in and out of their rooms, update their Hilton HHonors profiles, view and select programs from airlines and car rental companies, and even access information about area

restaurants. The cards contain 8K computer chips that function as a microprocessor and memory bank.



Restaurants are installing customer-activated terminals and kiosks to enhance guest service and add functionality to their systems. Shown here, above, are the NCR 7454 POS terminal and left, VeriFone's SC552 smartcard reader, now being rolled out in McDonald's restaurants in Germany,

But a year later six of the eight kiosks have been removed with the lone machines currently operating at the O'Hare Hilton and its property at the Burbank Airport.

"We found that some were used more than others," said Hilton spokesman Patrick Barry. He added that long check-in lines, a primary impetus for installing the system, "didn't occur as often" at some units. Still, analysts note that kiosk sales will reach \$3 billion by 2003 compared with \$370 million in 1996, and operator increasingly will experiment with interactive terminals. Also projected to exhibit growth into the millennium are transaction-oriented smart card systems that can communicate directly with computers. A recent study published in ID Systems magazine predicted that U.S. consumers would carry 1.8 billion smart cards by 2000, and 50 percent of all retail and banking transactions would be cleared through smart cards by 2005.

But will restaurant companies warm up to CATs?

"Waiters and waitresses have used touchscreens for years. The next step is for restaurants to let their customers use them," said Gordon Winstanley, president of Winstanley Associates, a kiosk manufacturer based in Traverse City, Mich.

He added that companies were leery of installing CATs and kiosks because they were costly and took up too much space, but more will "turn the tables" by allowing their guests to use CATs with credit, debit and smart cards. "It's ideal for the fast-food environment," he added.

Oak Brook, Ill.-based McDonald's Corp. apparently agrees with that sentiment, since the fast-food giant's Germany subsidiary, McDonald's Deutschland Inc., has teamed up with VeriFone Inc. of Santa Clara, Calif. to install a smart-card system at more than 870 restaurants in Germany. The Transaction Automation Loading and Information System, or TALIS, combines smart cards, VeriFone POS terminals and bank kiosks. But unlike other stored-value projects that require an ATM or cash transaction to add funds to the cards, the TALIS system allows McDonald's customers to reload the cards electronically from their bank accounts inside the restaurants and pay for their meals.

According to the operator, tests conducted earlier this year at 55 McDonald's found that those units rang up more than 30,000 transactions over a 10-week period.

McDonald's tapped Germany's smartcard payment system, known as the GeldKarte-System, and its large user base, in which nearly 40 million smart cards have been distributed since early 1997. Though the project represents the operator's broadest smart-card initiative, McDonald's over the past year has exhibited greater interest in smart cards. The chain participated in a Canadian promo this past May that gives smart cards supplied by Schlumberger to 120,000 members of the Quebec Soccer Federation, and it continues to run its McExtra loyalty program, which was introduced last fall to 71 outlets in Hawaii.

Sources have noted that there would be no impediment to the chain's importing a smart-card program similar to that in the United States. However, McDonald's Corp. spokesman Mike Gordon said that "there are no current plans to expand this beyond Germany."

Meanwhile, back in the United States, convenience store operator Sheetz Inc. of Altoona, Pa., this past summer invested upward of \$4 million to install a touchscreen CAT system as part of the chain's "Made To Order" foodservice program.

The OrderPoint TouchScreen platform, supplied by Radiant Systems of Pleasanton, Calif., uses full-motion audio and video to walk

customers through the menu-ordering process. With about four displays in each store, the system can identify customer preference, such as sandwich sizes and condiments and even performs a bit of suggestive selling for up-sell opportunities.

Customers can see the bread, tomato and lettuce on the screens," noted Bill Reilly, vice president of food and beverage the 206-unit operator. The system routes orders to kitchen display monitors and prints receipts for their meals.

The CAT system has had a definitive impact on the chain's comp figures. "We've seen same-store-- sales increases in the 9- to 110-percent range at stores that were previously labeled flat or up to 5 percent," Reilly said. CAT and other advanced terminals are being designed for use not only by restaurant customers but also by their employees.

Fresh off the manufacturing lines at NCR Corp. but scheduled for launch later this fall is the 7454, the company's newest point-of-sale system that packs a Windows NT-compatible platform with the multimedia applications of traditional kiosks. The 7454 and the 7401 CAT are now being tested by some prominent but undisclosed quick-service chains, according to Gregory Churak, vice president of hospitality industry marketing for NCR Corp.

"Operators are looking toward kiosk-like systems as employee access stations," he said. Employees would be able to look at job postings and to inquire and make changes to their benefits and tax status, he added.

Churak noted that there are many "customer-centric" applications for the system, such as customer surveys and nutritional or other information "that just does not fit on a menu board." Furthermore, the NCR platform can accommodate full-motion video and is "Internet-ready," which would allow operators to broadcast training programs at the registers. Churak even envisioned operators using such terminals as prescreening tools for perspective employees.

Similar to point-of-sale software initiatives that look to develop standards, the growth of card-based CAT is expected to be fueled by open systems. One such project, now being headed by IBM, Netscape Communications and Sun Microsystems, is called OpenCard Framework. It would allow smart cards to work across various hardware platforms like personal computers and automatic teller machines.

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